CLAIMS

I/We claim:

1. A method for conducting cashless transactions, comprising
the steps of:

receiving, at a first network device associated with a seller,
information identifying a product intended to be purchased at a
purchase price by a purchaser, the purchase price to be paid by a
transfer to the seller of funds on deposit in or credited to an
account of the purchaser, the identity of the purchaser account
being unknown to the seller;

transmitting over a network, to a second network device
associated with a financial institute at which the purchaser
account is maintained, an authorization of the purchaser to pay the
purchase price for the identified product through the transfer to
the seller of the funds from the purchaser account;

determining if the funds in the purchaser account are
sufficient with respect to the purchase price; and

transmitting over the network, to the first network device,
an authorization of the financial institute for the seller to
proceed with delivery of the identified product, the authorization
being transmitted only if the funds are determined to be
sufficient.

2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step
of:

transmitting over the network, from a third network device
associated with the purchaser to the first network site, the
information identifying the product intended to be purchased.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the information is
first information and the transmitted first information further
identifies the purchaser and that the payment of the purchase price
will be by the transfer of the funds from the purchaser account
unknown to the seller, and further comprising the steps of:

6   transmitting over the network, from the first network device
7 to the third network device, second information identifying a
8 plurality of products available for purchase, a plurality of
9 purchase prices each associated with a respective one of the
10 plurality of products, and a plurality of payment options including
11 payment by the transfer to the seller of the funds and payment by
12 at least one of credit card and debit card;
13   selecting, at the third network device, (i) the product to be
14 purchased from the plurality of products and (ii) the payment of
15 the purchase price by the transfer of the funds from the plurality
16 of payment options; and
17   transmitting over the network, from and the third network
18 device to the second network device, third information identifying
19 the product to be purchased, the purchase price of the product,
20 and the purchaser.

4. A method according to claim 3, wherein:
the authorization of the purchaser is transmitted. from the
third network device to the second network device.

5. A method according to claim 3, wherein:
the third information is transmitted responsive to the
selecting the payment of the purchase price by the transfer of
the funds.

1   6. A method according to claim 3, further comprising the step
2 of:
3   automatically establishing a hyperlink to the second network
4 device for transmission of the third information after the
5 selecting of payment of the purchase price by the transfer of the
6 funds.

1   7. A method according to claim 3, further comprising the steps
2 of:
3   transmitting over the network, from the first network device
4 to the second network device, a notice of delivery of the

5   identified product to the purchaser; and

6   directing the transfer of the funds to the seller responsive

7   to receipt of the notice of delivery at the second network device.

1   8. A method according to claim 1, wherein the method is

2   performed in real time and the network is the Internet.

1   9. A system for conducting cashless transactions, comprising:

2   a communications network;

3   a first network device, associated with a seller, configured

4   to receive information identifying a product intended to be

5   purchased at a purchase price by a purchaser, the purchase price to

6   be paid by a transfer to the seller of funds from an account of the

7   purchaser, the identity of the purchaser account being unknown to

8   the seller;

9   a second network device, associated with a financial institute

10 at which the purchaser account is maintained, configured to

11 receive, via the network, an authorization of the purchaser to pay

12 the purchase price for the identified product by the transfer of

13 the funds, to determine if the funds are sufficient with respect to

14 the purchase price, and to transmit, to the first network device

15 via the network, an authorization for the seller to proceed with

16 delivery of the identified product if the funds are determined to

17 be sufficient.

1   10. A system according to claim 9, further comprising:

2   a third network device, associated with the purchaser,

3   configured to transmit, to the first network device via the

4   network, the information identifying the product intended to be

5   purchased.

1   11. A system according to claim 10, wherein:

2   the information is first information and the first information

3   further identifies the purchaser and an intention of the purchaser

4   to pay the purchase price by the transfer of the funds;

5   the first network device is further configured to transmit,

6 to the third network device via the network, second information
7 identifying a plurality of products available for purchase, a
8 plurality of purchase prices each associated with a respective one
9 of the plurality of products, and a plurality of payment options
10 including payment by the transfer of the funds and payment by at
11 least one of credit card and debit card;
12   the third network device is further configured to receive
13 first input from the purchaser representing a selection of the
14 product intended to be purchased from the plurality of products, to
15 receive second input from the purchaser representing a selection of
16 the payment of the purchase price by the transfer of the funds from
17 the plurality of payment options, and to transmit, to the second
18 network device via the network, third information identifying the
19 product intended to be purchased, the purchase price of the
20 product, and the intended purchaser.

1   12. A system according to claim 11, wherein:
2   the third network device is further configured to transmit,
3 to the second network via the network, the authorization of the
4 purchaser.

1   13. A system according to claim 11, wherein the third network
2 device includes an input device for receiving the first input and
3 the second input.

1   14. A system according to claim 11, wherein:
2   the third network device is further configured to transmit,
3 to the second network device via the network, the third information
4 responsive to receiving the second input.

1   15. A system according to claim 11, wherein:
2   the third network device is further configured to
3 automatically establish a hyperlink to the second network device
4 via the network for transmission of the third information
5 responsive to receipt of the second input.

1   16. A system according to claim 11, wherein:

2   the first network device is further configured to transmit,

3 to the second network device via the network, a notice of delivery

4 of the identified product; and

5   the second network device is further configured to transmit,

6 via the network, a directive to transfer the funds

7 responsive to receipt of the notice of delivery.

1   17. A system according to claim 9, wherein the network is the

2 Internet and the system operates in real time.

1   18. An article of manufacture for conducting cashless

2 transactions over a network having a plurality of network stations,

3 comprising:

4   a computer readable storage medium; and

5   computer programming stored on the storage medium, wherein the

6 stored computer programming is configured to be readable from the

7 computer readable storage medium by a computer and thereby cause

8 the computer to operate so as to:

9   generate a signal to establish a first network communications

10 link, with a first network station associated with a seller;

11   receive from the first network station, via the first network

12 communications link, first information identifying a plurality of

13 products available for purchase from the seller, a plurality of

14 purchase prices each associated with a respective one of the

15 plurality of products, and a plurality of payment options including

16 payment of the purchase price by a transfer to the seller of funds

17 from an account of a purchaser and payment by at least one of

18 credit card and debit card;

19   display the first information;

20   receive first inputs from the purchaser selecting a product

21 from the plurality of products and a payment of the purchase price

22 by the transfer of the funds from the plurality of payment options;

23   automatically generate, responsive to the selection of the

24 payment of the purchase price by the transfer of the funds, a

25 signal to establish a second network communications link with a

26   second network station associated with a financial institute with
27   which the account is maintained;
28   transmit to the first network station, via the first network
29   communications link, second information identifying the selected
30   product, and the identity of the purchaser, without identifying the
31   account;
32   transmit to the second network station, via the second network
33   communications link, third information identifying the selected
34   product, the purchase price of the selected product, and the
35   identity of the purchaser;
36   receive from the second network station, via the second
37   network communications link, a request to approve payment of the
38   purchase price by the transfer by the financial institute to the
39   seller of the funds;
40   receive second inputs from the purchaser approving payment of
41   the purchase price for the selected product by the transfer by the
42   financial institute to the seller of the funds;
43   transmit to a second network station, via the second network
44   communications link, fourth information representing the purchaser
45   approval of the payment of the purchase price for the selected
46   product by the transfer by the financial institute to the seller of
47   the funds; and
48   receive, via the second network communications link, fifth
49   information representing an account statement indicating that the
50   funds have been transferred from the account by the financial
51   institute to the seller in payment of the purchase price of the
52   selected product; and
53   display the fifth information.

1   19. An article of manufacture according to claim 18, wherein
2   each of the network communication links is an Internet
3   communication link and the second network communications link is
4   established by a hyperlink.

1   20. An article of manufacture according to claim 18, wherein
2   the first network communications link is a relatively unsecure

3   communication link and the second network communications link is a
4   relatively secure communications link.

1   21. An article of manufacture for conducting cashless
2   transactions over a network having a plurality of network stations,
3   comprising:
4   a computer readable storage medium; and
5   computer programming stored on the storage medium; wherein the
6   stored computer programming is configured to be readable from the
7   computer readable storage medium by a computer and thereby cause
8   the computer to operate so as to:
9   receive, via the network, information identifying a product,
10   a purchase price of the product, an identity of a seller of the
11   product, and an identity of a purchaser intending to purchase the
12   product by payment of the purchase price through a transfer by a
13   financial institute to the seller of funds from an account of the
14   purchaser maintained with the financial institute, the account
15   being unidentified to the seller;
16   transmit to a first network station, via the network, a
17   request for purchaser approval of the payment of the purchase price
18   through the transfer by the financial institute to the seller of
19   the funds;
20   receive from the first network station, via the network, the
21   purchaser approval of the payment;
22   determine if the funds are sufficient with respect to the
23   purchase price; and
24   transmit to a second network station, via the network, an
25   authorization of the financial institute to proceed with a sale to
26   the purchaser of the product after the funds are determined to be
27   sufficient and the purchaser approval is received;
28   transmit a direction to transfer the funds in payment of the
29   purchase price of the product; and
30   transmit to the first network station, via the network, an
31   account statement indicating the funds have been transferred in
32   payment of the purchase price of the product.

1   22. An article of manufacture according to claim 21, wherein
2 the network is the Internet.

1   23. An article of manufacture according to claim 21, wherein
2 communications transmitted to and received from the first network
3 station via the network are relatively secure communications and
4 communications transmitted to and received from the second network
5 station via the network are relatively unsecure communications.

ADD B'